

REMARKS

In view of the above amendments and following remarks, reconsideration and reexamination are respectfully requested. Further, withdrawal of the final Office Action and allowance of the application as a whole is further requested.

REQUEST FOR WITHDRAWAL OF FINAL OFFICE ACTION

In the final Office Action of June 27, 2002, the Examiner objected to claim 23 based upon the use of the word "transferring". While it was clear that the Examiner understood the intent behind the term, based upon its definition in the specification, the Examiner's suggestion has been adopted.

With respect to claims 23-28, 30-33, 35-38, 40 and 42, the Examiner rejected these claims as being indefinite. This position by the Examiner is respectfully traversed.

The term "longitudinal direction" is specifically defined in the specification and it is clearly understood. Indeed, the Examiner goes on to discuss the term and appropriately applies the term with respect to its intended meaning as clearly defined in the specification. Accordingly, it is respectfully submitted that the Examiner's rejection of the claims based upon this term being indefinite is inappropriate, because the scope of the term is clearly understood.

The same in fact applies with respect to the "thickness direction". The Examiner correctly notes that the specification and claims define the thickness direction as the direction perpendicular to the longitudinal direction. The longitudinal or circumferential direction is not indefinite simply because it is curved. Just because a direction changes constantly, for example, does not mean that the term is not understood or that one of ordinary skill in the art does not understand the scope of the claims. Indeed, the Examiner appears to clearly understand what is intended.

Based upon the above, it is respectfully submitted that the Examiner's rejections of these terms is inappropriate and should be withdrawn. Accordingly, the finality of the Office Action should also be withdrawn.

It should be noted that the claims have been proposed to be amended to avoid the use of the term "longitudinal direction" in view of the Examiner's concern about this language. The term now used is "loop shaped direction" in the hope that this will satisfy the Examiner.

The Examiner further noted that if the "cross section" was defined as the plane of the surface of the transfer liquid at a transfer initiating site, the thickness direction is the line perpendicular to the tangent at each point and the cross section is in the thickness direction, then the plane of the surface of the transfer liquid must be perpendicular to a tangent of the circle. However, in prior claim 23, the cross section defined at the transfer initiating site is not required to be the same cross section as that at which the transfer film substantially concurrently contacts a circumference of the loop shaped workpiece. Such was not stated in the claim or specification, in fact. Claim 45 has been proposed to avoid any confusion in the part of the Examiner by simply eliminating reference to the cross section of the loop shaped workpiece at the transfer initiating site and to just indicate that the plane of the surface of the transfer liquid at the transfer initiating site extends through the loop shaped workpiece.

The Examiner took the position that claim 23 was anticipated by JP 61-005981A. However, it is respectfully submitted that it is clear that this reference cannot meet the limitations of either prior claim 23 or newly proposed claim 45. For this reason, furthermore, the final Office Action must be withdrawn.

Specifically, prior claim 23 required downwardly immersing the loop shaped workpiece so that the transfer films substantially concurrently contact a circumference of a cross section of the loop shaped workpiece at the transfer initiating site. This clearly does not happen in the Japanese reference. For example, if the transfer initiating site is illustrated towards the right of the steering wheel, it seems clear that the transfer begins at the right side, and only manages to contact all of the surfaces, if ever, halfway along the range of contact with the transfer film on the liquid. Thus, this Japanese reference cannot meet the previous limitation of substantially concurrently contacting the circumference of a cross section of the loop shaped workpiece with the transfer film at the transfer initiating site in the thickness direction. (It is noted that the limitation of substantially concurrently contacting the circumference of the cross section of the loop shaped workpiece with the transfer film at the transfer initiating site does not require the cross section to be in the plane of the liquid, but simply for such contact to take place at the transfer initiating site.)

Similarly, in Watanabe et al. the immersion of the steering wheel does not result in substantially concurrent contact of the transfer film with the loop shaped workpiece at a cross section

taken in the thickness direction. Nor does Watanabe et al. disclose or suggest moving the loop shaped workpiece along the loop shaped direction in which the workpiece extends at the transfer initiating site so as to continuously immerse the loop shaped workpiece in the transfer liquid while maintaining the attitude of the workpiece to the surface of the transfer liquid the same. This step, required by prior claim 23 as well as new claim 45, is simply absent from this reference.

In the Office Action, the Examiner rejected various claims under both 102 and 103 over the Japanese reference. The Examiner referred to the reasons set forth in the previous Office Action. However, even referencing the Examiner's previous comments, it is submitted to be clear that this reference cannot carry out the step of substantially concurrently contacting a cross section of the loop-shaped workpiece taken in a thickness direction as required by prior claim 23 and proposed claim 45.

The Examiner previously took the position that Watanabe et al. discloses shifting the steering wheel to continuously immerse the steering wheel in the liquid while maintaining an immersion attitude. As noted above, this does not appear to be the case with Watanabe et al., unless the Examiner is intending to refer to the prior art of Fig. 6, which appears to correspond to the Japanese abstract in any case. In any case, it is respectfully submitted to be clear that Watanabe et al. also fails to teach the substantial concurrent contact of the transfer film with a cross section taken in the thickness direction of the loop shaped workpiece.

Accordingly, it is respectfully submitted that the Examiner's rejections fail to establish a *prima facie* case of unpatentability of either prior claim 23 or current claim 45. Accordingly, it is respectfully submitted that the final Office Action must be withdrawn, and such withdrawal is respectfully requested.

ENTRY OF THE ABOVE PROPOSED AMENDMENTS IS IN ORDER

The amendments made above serve to cancel the claims considered drawn to a non-elected invention by the Examiner. While Applicant does not acquiesce to the position taken by the Examiner, in order to speed the prosecution of this application, these claims have now been canceled.

Claim 45 has now been proposed in place of prior claim 23. This claim maintains the distinctions over the prior art references cited by the Examiner while at the same time addressing some of the concerns by the Examiner. For this reason, entry of the claim is appropriate.

Furthermore, it is respectfully submitted that entry of the above amendments is in order as a matter of right in view of the clear failure of the prior Office Action to establish a *prima facie* case of unpatentability under 35 U.S.C. §102 and §103.

As noted above, claim 45 attempts to clarify the situation by reciting that the downwardly immersing of the loop shaped workpiece takes place so that a plane of the surface of the transfer liquid at a transfer initiating site extends through the loop shaped workpiece. Further, the loop shaped workpiece is moved along the loop shaped direction in which the workpiece extends at the transfer initiating site so as to continuously immerse the loop shaped workpiece and the transfer liquid while maintaining the attitude of the workpiece to the surface of the transfer liquid the same such that a circumference of a cross section of the loop shaped workpiece, taken in the thickness direction of the loop shaped workpiece, is substantially concurrently contacted with the transfer film of the transfer initiating site. It is this feature that is not found in any of the references cited by the Examiner (in addition to other aspects which may or may not be discussed herein).

With the present invention, Applicant addresses problems in the prior art of producing a straight grade pattern in a circumferential direction or longitudinal direction (now referred to as a loop shaped direction) of a workpiece. In other words, the present invention addresses distortion problems in the pattern with respect to the prior art.

As discussed in the specification beginning at the middle of page 19, the transfer of a pattern to the entire circumference of a workpiece that is apparently cut crosswise by the surface of transfer liquid begins on the upstream side with respect to the direction of feeding of the transfer film, and then continuously progresses to the sides of the workpiece and then the lapping of the transfer film at the back of the workpiece. Thus, transfer of the transfer pattern to the workpiece W is not substantially concurrently carried out over the entire circumference of the workpiece W apparently cut crosswise, but continuously progresses from the upstream side to the downstream side with a certain time difference. Thus, the present inventor has considered that the transfer of the film to the

workpiece permits a locus of the lapping of the transfer film on the workpiece to substantially coincide with a circumference of the section of the workpiece taken in the thickness direction, minimizing the shifting or misregistration of the pattern in the circumferential direction. In other words, the immersion attitude angle and fee rate are set so as to permit the point of lapping of the transfer on the workpiece W to substantially coincide with the circumference of the section of the workpiece in the thickness direction. The present invention thus provides for the downwardly immersing of the loop shaped workpiece to take place so that, at the transfer initiating site, a cross section of the loop shaped workpiece, taken in the thickness direction of the loop shaped workpiece, is substantially concurrently contacted with the transfer film.

As discussed above, such features are neither disclosed nor suggested by the prior art.

CONCLUSION

For the above reasons, it is respectfully submitted that withdrawal of the final Office Action and entry of the above amendments is in order. Accordingly, such entry of the above amendments is respectfully requested. Further, reconsideration of the rejections contained in the final Office Action is requested in lieu of the fact that the references do not disclose or suggest the above-discussed features of independent claims 23 and 45. For these reasons, all of the claims as proposed to be amended above clearly define over the prior art of record. Indication of such is respectfully requested.

Attached hereto is a marked-up version of the changes made to the claims by the current amendment. The attached page is captioned "**Version with Markings to Show Changes Made**".

In view of the above amendments and remarks, it is submitted that the present application is now in condition for allowance, and the Examiner is requested to pass the case to issue. If the Examiner should have any comments or suggestions to help speed the prosecution of this application, the Examiner is requested to contact Applicant's undersigned representative.

Respectfully submitted,

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Version with Markings to
Show Changes Made

24. (Amended) The liquid pressure transfer method of claim [23] 45, wherein a relative [transfer] movement speed between the loop shaped workpiece and the transfer film is set so that an immersion rate of the loop shaped workpiece and a feed rate of the transfer film can be maintained substantially equal.

25. (Amended) The liquid pressure transfer method of claim 24, wherein a deflection angle defined between a plane in which the [longitudinal] loop shaped direction extends and a relative movement direction of the transfer film is set to be within a range of plus or minus 90 degrees.

26. (Amended) The liquid pressure transfer method of claim 24, wherein an immersion attitude angle defined between a plane in which the [longitudinal] loop shaped direction extends and the surface of the transfer liquid is set to be within a range of plus or minus 10 to 90 degrees.

27. (amended) The liquid pressure transfer method of claim 24, wherein:
the loop shaped workpiece comprises a steering wheel component having a transfer-not-required portion;
said downwardly immersing comprises initially immersing the steering wheel component in the transfer liquid at the transfer-not-required portion; and
said moving the loop shaped workpiece in the [longitudinal] loop shaped direction comprises rotating the steering wheel component while maintaining the attitude of the workpiece to the surface of the transfer liquid the same at the transfer initiating site during transfer of the transfer pattern.

30. (Amended) The liquid pressure transfer method of claim [23] 45, wherein a deflection angle defined between a plane in which the [longitudinal] loop shaped direction extends and a relative movement direction of the transfer film is set to be within a range of plus or minus 90 degrees.

31. (Amended) The liquid pressure transfer method of claim 30, wherein an immersion attitude angle defined between a plane in which the [longitudinal] loop shaped direction extends and the surface of the transfer liquid is set to be within a range of plus or minus 10 to 90 degrees.

32. (Amended) The liquid pressure transfer method of claim 30, wherein:
the loop shaped workpiece comprises a steering wheel component having a transfer-not-required portion;

said downwardly immersing comprises initially immersing the steering wheel component in the transfer liquid at the transfer-not-required portion; and

said moving the loop shaped workpiece in the [longitudinal] loop shaped direction comprises rotating the steering wheel component while maintaining the attitude of the workpiece to the surface of the transfer liquid the same at the transfer initiating site during transfer of the transfer pattern.

35. (Amended) The liquid pressure transfer method of claim [23] 45, wherein an immersion attitude angle defined between a plane in which the [longitudinal] loop shaped direction extends and the surface of the transfer liquid is set to be within a range of plus or minus 10 to 90 degrees.

36. (Amended) The liquid pressure transfer method of claim 35, wherein:
the loop shaped workpiece comprises a steering wheel component having a transfer-not-required portion;

said downwardly immersing comprises initially immersing the steering wheel component in the transfer liquid at the transfer-not-required portion; and

said moving the loop shaped workpiece in the [longitudinal] loop shaped direction comprises rotating the steering wheel component while maintaining the attitude of the workpiece to the surface of the transfer liquid the same at the transfer initiating site during transfer of the transfer pattern.

39. (Amended) The liquid pressure transfer method of claim [23] 45, wherein:
the loop shaped workpiece comprises a steering wheel component having a transfer-not-required portion;

said downwardly immersing comprises initially immersing the steering wheel component in the transfer liquid at the transfer-not-required portion; and

said moving the loop shaped workpiece in the [longitudinal] loop shaped direction comprises rotating the steering wheel component while maintaining the attitude of the workpiece to the surface of the transfer liquid the same at the transfer initiating site during transfer of the transfer pattern.

42. (Amended) The liquid pressure transfer method of claim [23] 45, wherein:

the loop shaped workpiece comprises a steering wheel component having a front side and a rear side, the front side defined as being intended to face a driver's seat when mounted on a vehicle and the rear side defined as being substantially out of view from a driver's seat when mounted on a vehicle; and

said downwardly immersing comprises immersing the steering wheel component such that the transfer pattern is transferred to the surface of the steering wheel component with a joint line of the transfer pattern formed on the rear surface of the steering wheel component.